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ABSTRACT

Although many women presently reject traditional roles, they continue to serve as advocates for various cultural groups that lack power. The phenomenon of "new volunteerism" may be an example of the advocacy that is emerging from the rejection of the caretaker role. The "new" volunteer may serve as board member, committee chair, and so on for nonprofit organizations such as the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). The recognition of a conflict between feminism and racism prompted the YWCA adoption of "The One Imperative," which reveals a militancy that intimates a recent attitudinal change and may well reflect a change in role identification and advocacy motive. A dramatistic analysis bounded by Kenneth Burke's pentad technique (what, how, when, who, and why) is a means of providing insights into the motive for the advocacy expressed in the Imperative. It reveals that the traditional role of caretaker, rooted in mystical philosophy, could no longer serve in its social capacity as a "higher" purpose for whites or for women. The demands of the transition to a new pragmatic philosophy called forth a role that better suited the identifications women were choosing and minorities were demanding. Advocacy, backed by power sharing, was the method demanded by the situation and responded to in the rhetoric of a new philosophy. The YWCA, as an organization uniquely capable of responding to the needs of women and minorities, was the only agency of its kind to do so. Its effectiveness was ensured at inception by the public nature of the act, its militant style, and its systemized audit process. (HOD)

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"Women's Advocacy: A Dramatistic Analysis of the YWCA Imperative"

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Women's Advocacy: A Dramatistic Analysis of the YWCA Imperative

Women have functioned -- both throughout history and in the present -- as champions of minorities and subcultures; as advocates. The role of advocate that seems to be taken on more readily by the one sex may be related to the similar, traditional role of caretaker, which has been so consistently "women's work." One who thoroughly acquires the values of a caretaker might be expected to "care" for individuals in need. Although many women presently reject traditional roles, they continue to serve as advocates for various cultural groups that lack power.

The phenomenon of "new volunteerism" may be an example of the advocacy that is emerging out of the rejection of the caretaker role. Many women who have successful professional careers have assumed the responsibilities in the community that traditionally had been assumed by homemakers extending the caretaker role. The "new volunteer" may serve as board member, committee chair, guest lecturer, fund raiser, and so on, for non-profit organizations that contribute to the welfare of the community.

The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) is an agency of and for women that has been promoting women's strengths and addressing women's concerns for over one hundred years by organizing women for activism as well as activity. The YWCA's Statement of Purpose reflects its traditional roots in Christianity and suggests a value base that is non-threatening and socially acceptable:

> "The Young Women's Christian Association of the United States of America, a movement rooted in the Christian faith as known in Jesus and nourished by the resources of that faith, seeks to respond to the barrier-breaking love of God in this day. The Association draws together into responsible membership women and girls of diverse experiences and faiths, that their lives may be open to new

understanding and deeper relationships and that together they may join in the struggle for peace and justice, freedom and dignity for all people."

Founded in 1858, the YWCA is one of the oldest, continuing women's organizations. Traditionally, the association has engaged in "Christian" activities that might be construed as filling the caretaker's role in the community (e.g. establishing recreational and residence centers). In this capacity, members found their services used most often by the society's disadvantaged people--that is, "minorities" by way of race, sex or socioeconomic class. With the social welfare programs that emerged after the Depression, the YWCA found the caretaker role to be less critical to their clientele. The Association continued to perform some traditional services, but came to serve most often the socially disadvantaged; that is, women working in home. After the war ended, women returned to the home to care for the family. The YWCA provided activities to bring women together, socially and often politically. The isolation brought on by increased mobility and suburban housing changed the nature of the membership toward a largely middle-class, white constituency.

The feminist movement spread through the middle-class first, as women began to reject their sexually-determined status in society. Many returned to work, established themselves professionally, or became more politically active. Although the YWCA always has been an integrated organization, the white majority membership, in its commitment to women's rights and empowerment, seemed dangerously close to forgetting the concerns of minority members. Membership confronted the issue in Houston, 1970: "One can't be both a racist and a feminist. Feminism is a world view advocating a change in the social order."[1] All women were clearly not benefitting equally from feminist gains. The recognition of a conflict between feminism and racism prompted the adoption of "The One Imperative," which reveals a militancy that intimates a recent attitudinal change and may well reflect a change in role identification and advocacy motive:

"To thrust our collective power toward the elimination of racism wherever it exists and by any means necessary."

Kenneth Burke's pentad and his concept of identification will be employed to analyze the Imperative and to try to discover the motive for this statement. Burke undertook the construction of a system to simplify the subject of human motivation. He set up a pentad of key terms that describe the answers to five questions: what was done (act), when or where (scene), who (agent), how (agency), and why (purpose). Additively, the answers to the five questions should constitute a complete statement about motives.[2] The "grammatical resources" found in the pentad, when specifically used, form statements which describe philosophies.[3] As attributes of a common substance (a symbolic act), the terms interrelate and may be transformed by the philosophy in use, to apply the principles in a specific situation.[4] The term which is emphasized in a situation under analysis often points to the dominant philosophy. The motive, then, should be consistent with that philosophy.[5]

The concept of identification as used by Burke refers not only to explicit, rhetorical design but to the "ways in which we spontaneously, intuitively, even unconsciously persuade ourselves."[6] Burke suggests searching for implicit modes of identification apart from a specified role. Because modes of identification are so critical in the formation of identity (for an individual or group), they can be powerful clues to motivation. A dramatistic analysis bounded by Burke's pentad technique is a means of providing insights into the motive for the advocacy expressed in the YWCA Imperative.

The Rhetorical Act in Context

The proposal of the Imperative at the 1970 national convention of the YWCA in Houston, Texas, although adopted by the delegates, was met by resistance and alienated some members.[7] Yet, support for the Imperative was strong enough to secure its inclusion with the YWCA's "Statement of Purpose" and thus to serve as an emphatic public commitment that informs all policy. The verbal act performed in the

public statement of an imperative emerged from serious consideration of the traditional and Christian purpose of the YWCA. The act itself is a specific response to a conflict between the purpose expressed as an ideal (e.g. "justice," "freedom," "dignity"), and the reality of life for minorities (injustice, limited opportunities, indignity).

Each local organization is responsible for implementing the Imperative. All facets of YWCA activity are to be monitered by means of an Action Audit for Change Process; Process is the ongoing responsibility of each local organization to measure their success in expressing the Imperative through program.

The Pentad

The Imperative can be analyzed according to Burke's pentad as follows:

1. Act: a militant, verbal stance assumed by a women's organization expressing the intent to actively pursue the elimination of racism (a statement advocating equality for minorities).
2. Scene: a hierarchical society in which racism and sexism have been institutionalized to maintain labor and power divisions. The contradictions implied in the use of such tactics in a "democratic" society that officially promotes "equality" only recently have been acknowledged.
3. Agent: the YWCA, an established women's organization that has subscribed to traditionally-Christian values while attempting to serve the changing needs of women as they are acknowledged.
4. Agency: a public statement that is continually reaffirmed and supported. The statement is employed as a foundation for all policy, new or revised. Institutionalized support systems include: an "Action Audit for Change Process" served by

committees in each local branch, a national affirmative action policy involving active minority recruitment, community outreach staff positions, and conscientious program planning to serve the needs of the minority community.

5. Purpose: to communicate a commitment to social equality. Specifically, the community to be served (women, youth, and "third world women and girls"[8]) is addressed; however, the message is meant to be overheard so that the YWCA membership may be construed as seriously purposeful agents of change who intend to "empower" the relatively powerless.

Ratios

The interfaces that are formed among the related elements of the pentad reveal various facets of the motive for the act. Burke defines ratios as "principles of determination,"[9] that is, one element forces the next to function in a certain way. A few ratios have been chosen for their capacity to clarify motive.

Scene -- (purpose) -- act: The conflict between a racist society and an organized stance against discrimination requires the analysis of an intervening element. Between the scene (racist society) and the act (anti-racist statement), the purpose (a commitment to Christian values of social equality) must have been addressed. The scene required this particular act, partly because of the intervening purpose. The key characteristic of the scene that forces this response is institutionalized inequality. The mild expression hidden in the Statement of Purpose ("together they may join in the struggle for peace and justice, freedom and dignity for all people") had been the traditional response to the scene, but by 1970, was inadequate. The decade prior to adoption of the Imperative set the scene that prompted this particular act.

The early 1960s nourished the full blossoming of the civil rights movement. Although it was essentially a nonviolent effort for change, the rhetoric of the movement came to be perceived as militant (e.g. the slogan "we shall overcome" may be construed

as a threat, although its context was usually a softly chanted tune accompanying marches or sit-ins).

Later in the preparatory '60s, the peace movement, emerging in nonviolence ("all we are saying is give peace a chance") struggled with the threat of violent factions (e.g. the Weathermen) to seduce frustrated activists to militancy. At the same time, the feminist movement experienced a rebirth from long-dormant roots, and its members identified with the movements that were currently active.

Due, perhaps, to the temporal sequence of events, activists for women's liberation identified first with members of the peace movement. An example serves to illustrate this identification. Women who had performed as counselors for draft resisters found that supporting the equal rights amendment (ERA) was consistent with their original role. According to the rationale, the ERA would make women eligible for draft into the armed services, thus increasing the number of people able to actively resist the draft, and so increasing the likelihood of eliminating the draft.

The height of anti-establishment activism appeared in the year 1970. The student strike and the last of the mass marches for peace occurred in the spring of that year. Hypocrisy was under fire, and that included inconsistencies between policy and action. The scene for the act adopted, then, was a situation of high confrontation, of activism, and reaction to a racist, sexist society. The time was right for organizations to introspectively 'take stock' in view of the changes expected by membership. The style of the act, a militant stance, was determined by the scene in which it occurred, but a question intrudes: why this act from this organization and from no comparable organization?

Although the chain of elements culminates logically in an act that attempts to resolve the conflict between the larger scene and the organization's purpose, an inconsistency in similar cases provides a clue to the nature of the motive. If one considers Christian service organizations that are male-dominated, one finds that, although the same scene-purpose chain must exist, a similar response has not been enacted. The strength of expression found in the YWCA

Imperative is not to be found in comparable men's associations. An examination of the scene's influence on the association as a women's organization (agent) may clarify the difference in responses to the scene.

Scene -- agent: The scene, as explicated above, was a situation involving conflict between a racist, sexist society and those individuals, prepared by the movements of the '60s, who wanted to change it. The agent, a women's service association, necessarily changed in response to its membership which emerged from that scene.

Burke has referred to the scene-agent form as deterministic; that is, a policy has to be adopted in a given situation.[10] In this situation, those most affected by the scene (minorities and women) were also those most likely to constitute the membership of the agent, the YWCA. Although white, middle class women made up the bulk of membership, the confrontation by minority members at the national conference forced the members to consider action. Lip service had been rendered to advocacy for minorities, but no tangible action had been taken. The YWCA had always been feminist in theory, and its members were becoming more vocal and active feminists in fact, following the examples set in the '60s. In recognition of the shared experiences of women and minorities, and a shared conflict with the existing scene, membership acknowledged that "one can't be both a racist and a feminist."

The scene produced the confrontation consisting of the conflict between feminism and racism, which could only be presented to an agent capable of comprehending and acting upon that conflict. That agent, a women's service association dedicated to Christian values of justice and freedom, had to resolve the conflict raised between laissez-faire racism and the new advocacy for equality prompted by feminism.

Agent -- (purpose) -- act: The agent has been defined in terms of its purpose (activity for and by women based on Christian values) as well as its membership. The organization's Statement of Purpose, although distinct conceptually from the pentadic purpose for the act, has been addressed by its members in terms of action: to "draw

together . . . women and girls" that they may "struggle for peace and justice, freedom and dignity for all people." The Imperative (act) is seen by the members as stemming form the Statement of Purpose; and in fact it is a more militant extension of that Purpose with, however, a different philosophical base (see Philosophical Transformation) than the formal Statement of Purpose. The pentadic purpose also includes the construction of a new public image for the organization. The agent's response to the scene, in recognition of its purpose, had to be a public statement of policy in a strong, militant style designed to promote activism. The agent's feminist base required a strong commitment to minority advocacy in order to reinforce its advocacy of social change.

Not only was the act a product of its scene, it was specifically the product of feminist women serving both women and minorities. The confrontation displaying the implicit identification between women and minorities, on the basis of social inequities, forced the organization to adopt a clear statement of advocacy and then to follow through.

Act -- agency: Since the adoption of the Imperative, systems have been constituted to ensure that change will occur and progress will be made -- that is, that the power of the YWCA will be used to eliminate racism. In recognition of the fact that many commitments of the 1960s faded into apathy, the national organization required an Action Audit for Change Process to be set up in each local association. That process involves periodic reports of specific progress made in recruiting minority involvement in the YWCA, community audits and programs designed to empower minorities.

The act, or verbal stance, was stated stylistically and publicized such that inactivity invited severe criticism and recrimination. The commitment to act ("thrust our collective power") in an all-inclusive manner ("wherever it exists and by any means necessary") to eliminate racism demanded follow-through. The act made by this particular agent (agent-act form) determined the form of the agency in institutionalized systems.

As is the case with all forms of YWCA activity, the agency (how it is done) is manifest in committees, policy concerning recruitment and employment, staff assignments, community analyses and involvement, and program design. Specifically, this act (the Imperative) required the Action Audit for Change Process to document changes in behavior and thus support the advocacy commitment expressed.

Act -- (agency) -- agent: In the intervening years, the act -- agent ratio has evolved in a sequential relationship.[11] The act, performed in 1970 and processed since then in terms of the agency, has changed and continues to change the agent. Indeed, the agency ensures change in the agent to the degree that the agent (local YWCAs) enforces the act and so employs the agency. Specifically, the YWCA that publicizes the Imperative and documents change is likely to be the YWCA with a healthy minority membership, feminist orientation and commitment to minority advocacy.

The Motive

The motive may be clarified by Burke's concept of identification as a "sharing of the same substance."[12] The substance women share with third-world people or victims of racism is a negative substance, a lack of power. Women, too, are considered a "minority" (truly a misnomer) in that minority has been redefined as underprivileged -- i.e., less powerful. Women respond differently to powerless minorities than do non-minority men because they identify with minorities in their sharing of the lack of power.

The style of the act reinforces the "minority" identification. The militancy and force of the verbal expression is akin to the rhetoric of minority activist groups, particularly those that bloomed in the 1960s when the contradictions between real and ideal social policies were exposed and criticized. The severity of the problems for minorities prompted drastic acts designed to shock toward movement (e.g. mass marches, riots, protests). In similar

fashion, the style of the YWCA's act is designed to promote activity for change.

The accepted symbols of authority (male majority) have been rejected in the act to serve identification as well. Implied in the elimination of racism is a rejection of any authority that persists in racist practices and an acceptance of the victims of racism. In the process of identification, racism is rejected as the counterpart to sexism.

Philosophical Transformation

As noted in the introduction, the areas covered by the five terms in the "grammar of motives" overlap. Thus several areas may merge or all five may be reduced to a common "ancestor."[13] The term that emerges as primary or essential, from which all others may be deduced, is considered the "featured term" which reflects the philosophy dominating the pentad.

For each featured term, Burke distinguished a corresponding philosophical terminology. Using his schema, one may state the philosophy dominating the rhetorical act. A comparison of the featured term in the older Statement of Purpose with the term emphasized in the more recent Imperative will demonstrate a change in the philosophy motivating the association's rhetorical acts.

The Statement of Purpose, true to its label, emphasizes purpose or the answer to "why?". With an introductory nod to agent ("The Young Women's Christian Association of the United States of America,") the statement quickly overwhelms the agent with purpose ("a movement rooted in the Christian faith as known in Jesus and nourished by the resources of that faith,") and moves to an obscure act tied firmly to the stated purpose ("seeks to respond to the barrier-breaking love of God in this day."). The agency is broadly sketched ("The Association draws together into responsible membership women and girls of diverse experiences and faiths,") followed by a more detailed expression of purpose ("that

their lives may be open to new understanding and deeper relationships and that together they may join in the struggle for peace and justice, freedom and dignity for all people.").

Purpose dominates the more established Statement of Purpose and thus claims Burke, points to a philosophy of mysticism marked by unity of the individual with some "universal purpose."[14] The transcendent vision in this case is rooted in Christian faith, submersion in which may help compensate for doubts about human purpose. Mystical philosophies appear in times of confusion about the nature of human purpose, thus the faith in a cosmic purpose to guide human agents. Mysticism is often a "mark of transition,"[15] a sign that a new structure is needed to organize human life.

In this case, the unsatisfied need is for sociocultural equal opportunity. The transition period, prompted by the scene, consisted of a period of questioning established beliefs and demanding action.

The response to confrontation of the YWCA's mystical purpose was the Imperative, dominated by agency. Agent and act are briefly stated but with strength ("To thrust our collective power") followed by a very specific purpose, ("toward the elimination of racism"), an all-inclusive reference to scene ("wherever it exists") and concluded by a pwerful and threatening agency ("and by any means necessary."). Agency was chosen as the featured term, not only because its expressive style dominates the Imperative (i.e. militaristic and action-oriented), but because that final phrase was the subject of most of the controversy surrounding the Imperative's adoption.

Pragmatic philosophies are generated by featuring agency. The means or methods are emphasized in pragmatics while the ends or goals are stressed in mysticism.

The conflict raised in 1970 between the mystical goal of equality and the reality of inequality manifest in institutionalized racism and sexism proved to be the pivotal point in the transition period. A philosophical transformation from mysticism to pragmatism was demanded by the nature of the conflict. Although vague, the

mystical purpose expressed an acceptable, worthwhile goal, but lacked method. The inactivity fostered by such a philosophy inevitably resulted in a shift to pragmatism and its accompanying emphasis on the means to accomplish a more specific purpose: the elimination of racism.

The pragmatism of the act is borne out by the reality of the identification and the effectiveness of the agency. Women do indeed have much in common with powerless groups, yet have come to recognize the possibilities for strength in numbers and the contradiction of the term "minority" for women. The agency subserving the motive consists of organizing activities to pool the resources of "minorities" toward collective power.

The motive for minority advocacy, then, is the sharing of power among those who have little power alone. The value of advocacy for women lies in the collective power that advocacy promises. Women who are positive change agents for a cause (e.g. the elimination of racism) become more personally powerul individuals as they feel the power of the group working with them. Caretakers may lack power yet be capable of giving strength to others. Advocacy, however, implies that the advocate has power to share. Women, remembering the experience of powerlessness, can boost their collective power by sharing it with other groups that also are growing from a powerless state. Rejecting the caretaker role along with the powerless state in which they performed that role, many women are assuming the role of advocate as a positive, power-sharing identity. The YWCA Imperative exemplifies the new advocacy that women have embraced, embodied in the motive of power-sharing.

The Imperative As A Rhetorical Act

The elimination of sexism may appear to be a more logical purpose, at first glance, for a women's association than the elimination of racism. However, the scene was set such that an exclusively feminist stance could be construed as a rejection

of minority concerns. Women, still sensitive to the treatment they had received as "minorities," identified with the people voicing those concerns.

Of particular concern was the condescension apparent in the relational role assumed by the dominant racial group toward minorities. The traditional role of caretaker, rooted in mystical philosophy, could no longer serve in its social capacity as a "higher" purpose for whites (toward minorities) or for women (toward children, family and community).

The demands of the transition to a new pragmatic philosophy, brought on by the confusion of a changing scene, called forth a role that better suited the identifications women were choosing and minorities were demanding. Advocacy, backed by power-sharing, was the method demanded by the situation and responded to in the rhetoric of a new philosophy.

The YWCA, as an organization uniquely capable of responding to the needs of women and minorities, was the only agency of its kind to do so. The Imperative, in its pragmatism, includes its method in the purpose of the rhetorical act. Its effectiveness was ensured at inception by the public nature of the act, its militant style and systematized audit process. After ten years, the national newsletter, "YWCA Interchange," continues to publish articles dealing with the fitht against racism and to feature the Imperative prominently in each issue.

The Imperative will continue to effectively serve the power-sharing motive for advocacy in the YWCA until such time as the YWCA philosophy, and accompanying motive, again undergo transformation and call forth a new rhetorical act.

Notes

[1] Elizabeth Norris, "Archives Box: Pictures and Parallels," YWCA Interchange, March/April, 1980, p. 7.

[2]Kenneth Burke, A Grammar of Motives, (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1945), p. xv.

[3]Burke, Grammar, p. xvi.

[4]Burke, p. xvi.

[5]Burke, pp. xvi-xxii.

[6]Kenneth Burke, Language As Symbolic Action, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 301.

[7]Jennifer McGovern, "Combating Racism Demands Risk-Taking," YWCA Interchange, September/October 1980, p. 8.

[8]YWCA of Metropolitan Denver, TS, "Goals and Objectives of the YWCA of Metropolitan Denver," Goal III, p.2.

[9]Burke, Grammar, p. 15.

[10]Burke, p. 13.

[11]Burke, p. 15.

[12]Sonja K. Foss, lecture notes, "Rhetorical Theory," University of Denver, Denver, spring, 1981.

[13]Burke, Grammar, p. 127.

[14]Burke, p. 288.

[15]Burke, p. 288.